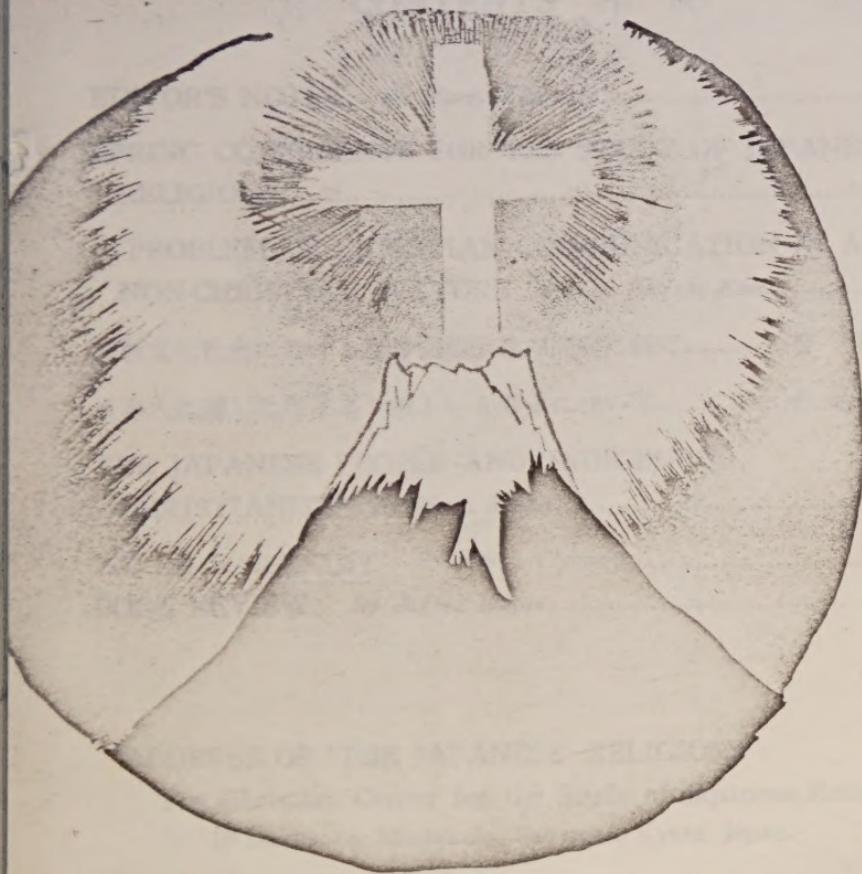


JAPANESE RELIGIONS

VOL. I NO. 2



A QUARTERLY

issued by

THE CHRISTIAN CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF
JAPANESE RELIGIONS

日本の諸宗教

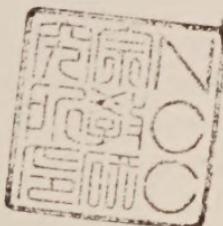
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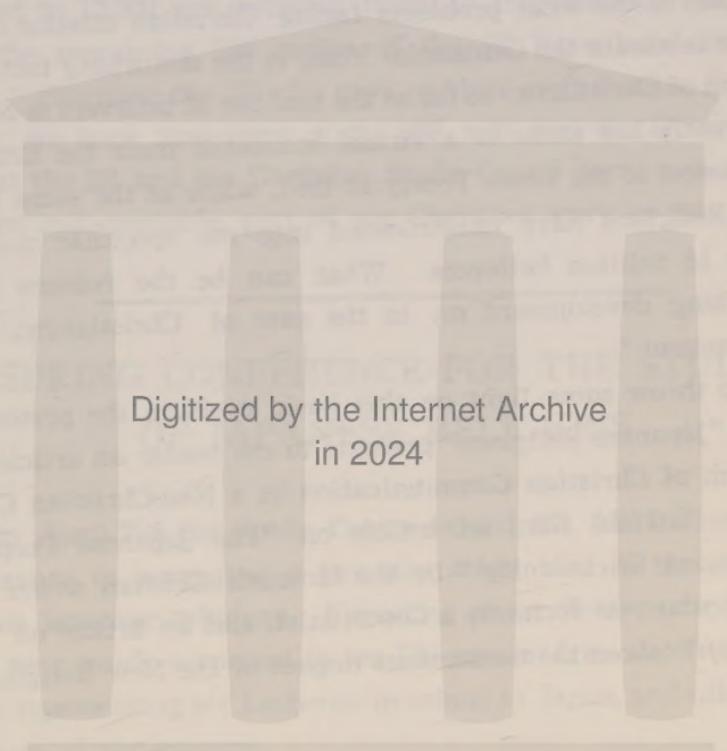
ADDRESS OF 'THE JAPANESE RELIGIONS':

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EDITOR'S NOTES

Contents of the Present Issue :

One of the vital problems facing Christian mission in Japan, as we celebrate the Centennial Year, is the disturbing fact that the growth of Christianity so far as the number of believers is concerned apparently has come to a virtual standstill from the time of the conclusion of the Peace Treaty in 1951, while at the same time the New Religions have mushroomed into the spectacular number of about 18 million believers. What can be the reasons for this disturbing development or, in the case of Christianity, lack of development?

To throw some light on this basic problem the present issue of the "Japanese Religions" presents to the reader an article on "A Problem of Christian Communication in a Non-Christian Culture" by Dr. Enkichi Kan, an article on "The Japanese People and 'Indigenous Christianity'" by the famous Cristian writer *Rinzo Shiina* who was formerly a Communist, and an article on "*Ise or Daisekiji*" (about the tremendous impact of the New Religion Soka Gakkai).

Looking Forward :

Starting with this issue articles on the most important **New Religions** will appear in the "Japanese Religions" to be followed later on with articles on the main branches of Buddhism and Shintoism. **Book Reviews and News from the Japanese Religious Scene** will gradually become a part of the JR. Several special projects are also under study two of these, a '**religious map**' of Japan and a **bibliography** on the New Religions will materialize already this year. In these and other matters constructive criticism,

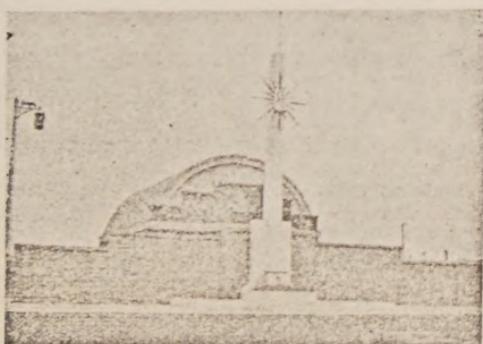
suggestions and advice will always be deeply appreciated.

Statistics :

The present issue is 1000 copies like the April issue. Contributions to the JR and the Study Center, from April 7 to June 4 amount to 12,000 yen received from 12 individuals. This means that the remaining 988 copies of the JR have been distributed freely. Thanking the 12 who gave us their contribution, and inspiration, we hope that some of the 988 will join the 12 in showing us that the JR and the Christian Study Center form a worthwhile, or even indispensable, part of our Christian work in this country.

SPRING CONFERENCE FOR THE STUDY OF JAPANESE RELIGIONS

On April 7-8 the Study Center helped the All Lutheran Free Conference in arranging a two day study tour to the centers of various Japanese religions. Expecting about 40-50 participants we were very much surprised to see 130 missionaries show up for the event, representing all Lutheran missions in Japan, and incidentally all parts of the country.



The symbol of *The P. L. Kyodan*

In preparation for the conference literature on the religions to be visited was sent out to the participants in advance and the preparation continued in the two buses to the extent the vitality of the two bus guides and 130 spring-conscious missionaries permit-

ted.

Starting from Osaka we arrived at the headquarters of the *PL Kyodan* and spent two hours there, seeing the various buildings and listening to speeches by *Masao Kawamura* and the leader of PL, *Toku-chika Miki*, followed by a period of questions. PL, which stands for Perfect Liberty and incidentally is the only Japanese religion with a foreign name, is one of the most modern and streamlined of the New Religions with about 600,000 believers. Unfortunately there was no time to see the famous 18 hole golf course of PL, which has earned for PL the nickname of '*gorufu shukyo*' ('the golf religion'), as we had to rush to be in time for the programme at *Tenrikyo*.

At the headquarters of *Tenrikyo*, situated in a town with the name of the religion outside *Nara*, we were given a very impressive and efficient reception incl. the visitation of the two main sanctuaries, the '*oyasato yakata*' (one of the largest buildings in Japan, with place for 12,000 to stay overnight), the library (with one of the best collection of books in Japan), speeches by some of the leaders of *Tenrikyo*, incl. the Patriarch *Nakayama*, followed by question period, etc.

Full of impressions and thoughts we returned to *Kyoto*, where we spent the evening discussing the challenge of the New Religions



The interior of the Divine Hall at P. L. Kyodan



The Library Hall at *Tenrikyo*, where the Patriarch Nakayama addressed the Group.



The *Ittoen* people going out to do their service of cleaning toilets

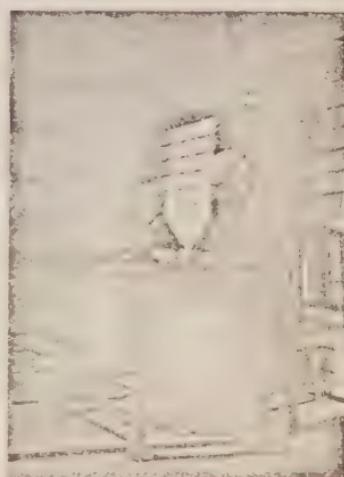
to Christianity, the approach of Christian mission in the light of this challenge and the reasons for the apparent standstill of Christian evangelization in Japan.



Lloyd Neve from Kurume is thanking Nishida Tenko, leader of *Ittoen*, for his speech

The next day was spent at the *Ittoen*, founded by *Nishida Tenko* who gave us a deeply interesting speech, and at the *Daitokuji* (*Zen* monastery) where a delicious vegetarian's lunch in the main hall of the temple was followed by speeches on *Zen* by *Tachibana*, abbot of *Tokuzenji*, and Mrs. Ruth Sazaki, famous American Buddhist, residing priestess in one of the temples of the *Daitokuji* compound.

The conference was closed after a service in the *Oncho* Lutheran Church, and the participating 130 missionaries returned to their respective places all over the country with a deeper knowledge of the religions and the religious way of life of the Japanese people.



Tachibana and Ruth Sazaki delivering their speeches at the Main Hall of the *Daitokuji* (*Zen* Monastery)

HARRY THOMSEN

A PROBLEM OF CHRISTIAN COMMUNICATION IN A NON-CHRISTIAN CULTURE

BY ENKICHI KAN

This year 1959, the Protestant churches of Japan are celebrating the Centennial of Protestant mission in Japan. From this vantage point, looking back over a hundred years of missionary activities, it is undeniable that the transplanting of Christianity to Japan, a non-Christian land, offers several problems of interest from the viewpoints of theology and history of religions.

In this paper I shall discuss one of these problems: why the progress of Christianity in Japan has been so slow. This question has been asked both by Christians themselves, and by those who are outside the Christian Church as well. It is said that it took nearly two hundred years for Buddhism to spread all over Japan. Therefore some people think that there is still another hundred years for Christianity to wait. However, if we think of the great number of missionaries and huge sums of money which have been spent in missionary work, the result of Protestant mission still has been rather disappointing. Then, what is the reason? There may be many reasons, but I shall discuss here only one which is related to the problem of doctrine.

A man born in a non-Christian country inevitably receives any foreign religion through his own non-Christian thought. There is a very interesting episode that when Roman Catholicism was first brought to Japan by Francis Xavier prior to Protestantism, the Japanese people thought it was a new kind of Buddhist highchurch sect. This episode, though exaggerated, brings out the truth, that the Japanese people unconsciously accept Christianity through the medium of Japanese traditional thought.

One good example is the Japanese translation of the word religion. As you may know, we Japanese use Chinese characters together with the Japanese phonetic signs. The word "shu-kyo", written in Chinese characters, means the teaching (kyo) of any religious group (shu). I do not know how occidentals react to the word "religion" instinctively, or what meaning they get out of this word "religion". It is often said that the word "religion" is derived from the Latin verb "religare" which means "to bind". I am not quite sure, whether ordinary occidentals really feel the original meaning of this Latin word, when they hear or read the word "religion". In the case of Japanese, the word "kyo" definitely means "teaching". And Christianity, translated as "Kiristo-kyo" literally means Christ's teaching, just as Buddhism, translated as "Bukkyo" means Buddha's teaching and Confucianism, translated as "Koshi-kyo" or "Zyu-kyo" means Confucius teaching. Since all these religions are called "teaching", Christianity is also regarded as a teaching, of course. Teaching here means theory, system of thought, *Lebensanschauung*, or we might call it law. This is one of the reasons why in Japan the group of "non-Church Christians" exists, a group who study the Bible intensively, perhaps more intensively than other Christians, but object to the sacraments. These Christians are found mostly among intellectuals and students.

Now, I do not necessarily object to calling Christianity the teaching of Christ. But we must make it clear that the content of the teaching of Christ cannot be said to be similar to that of Buddha, or Confucius. That is to say that Christ is not teaching about the truth about God. He is teaching about Himself. He is not pointing to the truth, but pointing to Himself as Truth. Therefore, to follow the teaching of Christ does not mean to live and act according to what Christ teaches, but to live and act, listening to what Christ, the living Christ, speaks to us now. If so, we must know the difference of the meaning of the word "teaching",

when it is applied to Christianity. The word is the same, but the meaning is different. What I want to stress here is this: the words in the Bible must be translated into Japanese but when Biblical words are translated into Japanese they are apt to lose their original meaning. We must use Japanese words, but Japanese words as such are not competent enough to convey the original meaning of Biblical words. Herein lies the difficulty.

Let us take one or two examples. The biblical word "love" is translated as "ai" in Japanese, but love in the sense of "ai" which ordinary non-Christian Japanese understand is not the same as the Biblical "agape". For the Japanese people there is no other meaning in the word love (ai) except "eros". Japanese people have never heard of the distinction between "agape" and "eros". Furthermore, when the Bible says "God is love" (I John 4:8), the context of this passage will make it clear to us that the Bible is trying to teach, that the love which the Bible speaks of cannot be understood correctly, unless the God, whom Christ reveals to us, is understood. In this sense we might say that "love" in the Bible cannot be understood by man alone, no matter how hard he may try. It can only be revealed by God.

Or we take another example from the word "resurrection". The Japanese translation of that word is "yomigaeri" or "fukkatsu". Either word in Japanese simply means "to come back to life again". So if Japanese people hear or read that Jesus Christ was resurrected, they immediately understand that He came back to His former life again. But if we read the Bible carefully, we shall understand that the meaning of His resurrection in the Bible is not Christ's coming back to His former life again. It means an entirely new creation. Paul calls it a spiritual body, not a corporeal body.

We can go on enumerating examples. But the trouble starts from the fact that preachers, both foreign missionaries and natives, take it for granted that the people who listen to them really

understand the meaning of Biblical words if they simply translate them into the corresponding Japanese words. When preachers and pastors begin to take such a procedure, they must guard themselves against making serious mistakes. We must be aware of the fact that almost all the words we use in our daily life can be said to have some connotation of, or at least to stand in some context with, our own native religious thought. Therefore, when those words are employed to explain foreign religious thought, caution should be taken so as to examine whether the words employed are really capable of conveying the new content of the foreign religion.

Here we must hope for help from the study of comparative religion. But in comparative religion during the Meiji era, emphasis was laid upon similarities among religions rather than upon their differences. And no doubt such a tendency in the study of comparative religion about that time must have had some influence upon the way of preaching mentioned above. But I am not going into this subject now. Suffice it to say that preachers and pastors were so eager to see as many Japanese as possible converted to Christianity, that they did not make other attempts than to make the Bible easily understandable to the Japanese.

On the other hand, we must not overlook the fact that in the Meiji era there was constant pressure from the government upon Christianity. In public it was declared that the Japanese people had freedom of religion, but in reality it was not so. About this subtle situation, in which Christianity was placed in the Meiji era, I refer to my article "The Imperial Rescript and the Christianity of Meiji Era", which I read at the 8th Congress for the History of Religions, 1955 in Rome (ATTI; Firenze, 1956, p. 200). Anyhow, up until the end of the last war it was not allowed to preach Christianity if it contradicted the Imperial Rescript. Therefore care had to be taken not to contradict the teaching of the Imperial Rescript when Christianity was preached. Naturally preachers and

pastors tried to explain Christianity by using traditional Japanese thoughts and words. Such a procedure will easily result in depriving a term of its specific Biblical content and in understanding every word of the Bible in the sense in which we understand it in our ordinary life. And if such a procedure goes on without any precautions, the specific content of Christian thought is gradually overlooked and finally entirely forgotten. Most of the attempts to Japanize Christianity, or to make Christianity indigenous ended in such a result. The trouble with this kind of attempts is that they tend to deviate completely from the fundamental truth of Christianity.

However, in the early period of Protestant mission there was a marked tendency to admire everything which came from abroad, i.e., from the Western countries. The interest in Christianity on the part of a great many Japanese could be called an expression of this admiration for things Western. It may be called a kind of exoticism. Since the Japanese way of thinking is essentially pantheistic, Japanese people think almost instinctively that all religions are ultimately one and the same. Then if there was any reason for choosing Christianity before the native religions, it was in most cases because Christianity was more up to date. Some people were said to have been impressed with the monotheism of Christianity, or the strict doctrine of moral monogamy. But if Japanese people were converted to Christianity by such motives they cannot be said to have been converted by the fundamental and central truth of Christianity. Those motives are rather secondary and peripheral in the Christian truth. And because they were converted by such secondary and peripheral motives, they could give up their faith without much difficulty. It is a well-known fact that in the middle of the Meiji era, a great many writers and intellectuals joined Christian churches, but most of them lost their interest in Christianity sooner or later. If they were really

converted by the fundamental and central truth of Christianity, I do not think that they could so easily abandon their faith. The fact that they did so proves that their conversion was brought about from secondary and peripheral motives.

To conclude: in the propagation of Christianity in Japan during the past hundred years efforts have been made to explain Christianity in such a way that the Japanese might grasp it easily. But due to these very efforts, I fear, the truth of Christianity has suffered distortion. I do not want to say that the truth of Christianity has never been transmitted to the Japanese people. Because, though on the surface having been impressed with secondary points of Christianity, unconsciously so to speak, they may have grasped the truth of Christianity while they were continuing their church life. But we cannot overlook the fact that many Japanese once converted are abandoning their faith in later years. To my mind, if they were really converted, or I should rather say, grasped by the central truth of Christianity, their way of thinking should have been changed and it would not be so easy to abandon their faith. Therefore, I fear very much that in Japan in the majority of cases, when Christianity was preached, the central truth of Christianity, i. e., the specific content of Biblical thought, was left out. Perhaps the best example of this is found in the so-called conception of eschatology. In order to grasp the truth of the Christian faith, we must understand the unique way of Biblical thinking, or Christian thinking. And this unique way of Biblical or Christian thinking is, in short, eschatological thinking. But this fundamental and central truth of the Bible, it may not be too much to say, has never been properly preached in Japanese churches. As I pointed out already, this is the result of the efforts to make Christianity understood by reducing its specific way of thinking to the traditional Japanese way of thinking. Here lies a very important problem of Christian communication in a non-Christian country.

異教文化社会に於ける福音信仰伝達の問題に就て

菅　円　吉

宣教百年記念を迎えるに当って、我々は日本社会に福音を移植する困難な問題に関して改めて再検討を加えねばならぬが、筆者は特に神学と宗教史の観点から取り上げたい。日本に於けるキリスト教の進展が何故にかくも遅々としているのかと云う重要な問題は、キリスト者であると否とに不拘、取り上げられて来た。或人は仏教が日本に広くその根を拡げるに二百年を要したと云う事實を挙げて、キリスト教も少なくとも後百年は必要と主張するが、過去百年間に日本に於て伝道に献身された宣教師や、注ぎ込まれた莫大な費用を考える時、決してプロテスタントの現況は満足すべきものと云い難い。

我々が考えねばならぬ重要な点は、異教社会に生れた者は必然的に彼自身の異教的思想を通して外來の宗教を受取ると云う点である。換言すれば我々は無意識的に日本の伝統的思想を媒介としてキリスト教を受取るのである。例えば、*religion* と云う言葉は「宗教」と邦訳されるのが、之は *religious group* 「宗」が有する *teaching* 「教え」の意味である。日本語の「教」は明白に教説、教義体系等を意味しており、*Christianity* が「キリスト教」と訳される時、それは「キリストの説教」と云う意味になる。ここに所謂「無教会キリスト教」と云われるグループが存在する1つの理由があるとも云えよう。彼等の聖書研究は表に優れて居り、その点では他教派の人々以上であるが、彼等はサクラメントに反対している。

筆者は必ずしもキリストの教えをキリスト教と呼ぶ事に異論があるのでないが、重要な事はキリストの教えの内容は、仏陀や孔子のそれと類似したものではないと云う点である。キリストは神に関する真理に就て教えているのではない、彼は彼自身に就て教えている。真理を指し示している

のではなく、真理としての彼自身を示している。

聖書の言葉が邦訳される時、その本来の意味が失われない様に努めねばならぬ。例えば、愛とか復活とかが邦訳された時、果してそれらの日本語が原語の本来の意味を正しく、誤りなく伝えているか否かが問われねばならぬ。宣教師や説教者が聖書の言葉を邦訳する時、聴く人々がその言葉の聖書的意味を正しく理解していると前掲する所に非常な問題が起る。宗教用語はその社会の宗教的センスを強く帯びている為に、正しい聖書的意味を特定の宗教用語に与える為には、どうしても比較宗教学の助けによって教義的相違点を明白にしなければならない。茲で、比較宗教学は、宗教相互間の類似点を明らかにするよりも、むしろ相異点を見出す事にその努力が向けられねばならぬ。

明治以来終戦に至る迄、教育勅語が道徳教育の重要な基準であったが、キリスト教の宣教もこの教育勅語の精神に背かぬ限りに於て許されたものであった。従って、どうしても説教者は伝統的日本精神と日本の用語に頼る事によってしか活動し得なかった。この事は多くの問題を惹起せしめた。所謂「日本のキリスト教」確立の努力の陰にこの様な危険性が含まれていた。又、一方の危険性は、西欧的なものに対する日本人の無条件な憧憬が、キリスト教の本質を充分に把握せしめるに至らなかつたと云う事実である。明治時代のキリスト者達が、果してどの程度まで福音の本質を明確に理解していたかは疑問の多い点であろう。

結論として筆者が主張したいのは、過去の日本に於ける宣教の努力が、キリスト教を容易に、日本的に理解出来る様な方法を以て行う事に向けられた為に、福音の真理がゆがめられたのではないか、と云う点である。筆者は今日まで、福音が正しく日本に伝えられなかつたと云うのではない、けれども、多数の日本人が且ては回心を体験しつつも、教会より離れて行くと云う事実によって、我々は彼等が福音を正しく理解し、又説教者が正しく神の言を宣べ伝えていたか否かを問わずにには居られない。福音信仰

を正しく把握する為には、ユニークな聖書的思考乃至キリスト教的思想を持たねばならぬ。そして筆者は、終末論的思考こそそれに他ならぬと思う。残念乍ら、それは日に正しく伝えられて来たとは云えない。この点に於て、筆者は非キリスト教文化国に於ける福音信仰の正しい伝達の重要性が存すると思うのである。

日本人に適したキリスト教という考え方について

椎名麟三

私は、洗礼を受けてからまだ七年もたっていないひとりの日本の小説家であるが、この小説家にキリスト教は、さまざまの要請をもってやって来るのである。というのは日本では小説家で洗礼を受けたのが珍らしいからであり、しかもかつての共産党員であり労働者出身の男であるということが、キリスト教にとって何程かの利用価値があるというふうに考えられているらしいのだ。そして私は、人々に講演させられたりマイクの前へ立たれたり書かされたりする。その私は、いつもそのような自分を、つかまつた泥棒みたないと感ぜざるを得ないのである。私の幼いとき、日本中をさわがせた説教強盗なるものがいて、それがつかまって仮釈放になってから、自分の強盗の経験をしやべりながら地方を巡回して歩いたり、新聞や雑誌に書き散らしたりしていたのだが、その男の講演のポスターを私の故郷の町で見たときの異様な感じを私は忘ることはできない。

それでは何故私が労働者出身の小説家であり、前共産党員のそれであることが、そしてまた日本では庶民といわれる人々の可能性を主題として作品行動をしていることが、キリスト教にとって利用価値があるのかと日本を知らない人々はふしぎにお感じになるかも知れない。しかしそれは何の不思議もないのあって、日本のキリスト教は、今まで労働者へ語りかける言葉はもちろん、庶民に語りかける言葉さえもつていなかったからである。いいかえるとキリスト教はいわば一部の知識階級のものであり、そしてその限定から出ようとはしなかったようなのだ。しかも敗戦後、共産主義思想が大学生や知識階級を蔽って行くにつれて、その大切な基盤さえも崩れて來たのだ。そしてキリスト教は、現在、私たち日本人全体から浮き上ってしまっていると言つていい。いまあやしげな新興宗教が、どしど

し民衆のなかに浸透しているが、そのことは信徒のふえないことをなげいているキリスト教に対する情ない皮肉となっていると言えるだろう。

しかしこの日本のキリスト教の直面しているなやみこそ、残念なことに実は私のはやみなのだ、何故なら私の本の読者は日本人であり、そしてその99.9パーセントまでが全くキリスト教に接したこともなく、また接することを欲しない人々であるからだ。だから、むしろキリスト教に関するかぎり私と日本人の間における交通は全く不可能なのだという覺悟をきめた方がいいと私は考えた。そしてまた私はそうして来たのだ。私の作品の方法もこの覺悟から探求されて来た。何故なら私にとってキリストの福音は決定的なものであったし、だから私の作品もキリストに対する私の信仰から逃れようとしても逃れることのできない以上、その私の信仰告白が日本人に対して訴え得るものとなるためにはどういう表現方法をとればいいかを考えなければならなかったからである。

もちろんキリスト教の日本におけるこのようなあわれな状態の原因については、内外の多くの学者によって探求し調査されて来ている。しかし私が洗礼を受けるまでキリスト教について肌に感じて来たことは、キリスト教はいつも権力の側にばかりついていて、私たちの苦しみのために苦しんだことではないということだったと言えるだろう、たとえば毎日新聞の宗教欄にのっていたことだが、ある大きなストライキが起ったとき、それについて意見を聞かれた牧師さんが、資本家側も労働者側とともに信仰というものがないからこういう事態に陥ったのだとそのストライキ全体を裁いていた。もちろんそれは数年前の私が洗礼を受けてまもないころのことで、いまはそんなバカげたことを口にする牧師さんはもういないだろう。しかしこの牧師さんの言葉は、おもいがけなく日本におけるキリスト教の位置を端的に示したと私に感じられたのである。それは労働者はもちろん資本家のなやみをさえもなやもうとしたかったということだ。そして他の国は知らず、わが日本においては、国民は資本家側であるか労働者側であるかで

あって、それ以外の人間は存在していないのである。だから日本のキリスト教は、地上をはなれて、と言っても天でもないところの空中にうかんでいたのだということができるだろう。

しかもナザレ人イエスは、地球の人類のために血をながしたかも知れないが、わが日本人のためには血をながしたのではないというおかしな感じが私たち日本人にはあるのだ。この感じは、前のストライキを裁いた牧師さんの考え方とも実はつながりをもっているのである。キリスト教の日本人に対する異質性としてだ。いわば日本語に対する外国語のような存在としてである。しかも外国語の通用するのは、ほんの一部分の人間の間においてだけであり、それらの人間はわが日本においては大抵、私たちとちがった特権階級的な人間であるのが普通なのであった。外国語イクオル外国人イクオル特権階級というな図式が私たち国民のなかにあるのだ。私たち日本人が外国人に対して必要以上の尊敬を示すのは、このような図式が私たちの心にしみ込んでいるからだということができるだろう。もっとも最近は、アメリカ軍の駐留によって外国人も日本人と同じ人間であり、だからわるい者もくだらない者もいるということがボツボツわかって来はじめているとしてもだ。

そしてキリスト教のこのような日本に対する異質性は、どんなことがあってもそくことはできないし、また軽々しくのぞこうとしてはならないというのが私の意見なのである。それはたしかに私たちのなかにもたらされたとき、労働者であり日本人であるような私たちとは矛盾するだろう。しかしこの矛盾こそ悲しいがまた一方喜ぶべきものであり、その矛盾からはじめて生きた言葉や行動が生れて来ると思うのである。それが異質なものが、異質のままに私たちに生きて行くことのできる道であると思うのである。そして私の考えでは、この生き方が、少くともあのストライキを裁いた牧師さんの生き方よりも、はるかに日本的であるだけでなくはるかにキリスト教的だと私には思われるのだ。また、キリスト教から日本人にと

って異質だと思われるものをけずり落して行こうとするよりもだ。何故ならキリストも私たち人間にとて異質な存在だったと言えるからである。そして人間に対する異質さを失ってしまえば、キリスト教国の人々にとっても、そのキリスト教はキリスト教でなくなっていると断定していいと思うのだ。

だからと言ってその異質性に、逆にこだわることはもちろんナンセンスである。全くそのこだわりは必ず外的なおかしさになってあらわれるからかくしようもないとしてもだ。異質を強調しようとして教会の窓に、わざわざヨーロッパの中世紀の教会にあったようなステンド・グラスなどをはじめたりする必要はないのである。キリスト教の日本人に対する異質さをキリストの人間に対する本質的な異質さにふかめて、そこから生れて来る言葉や行為こそ、日本人に訴え得るもっとも日本的なものとなると思うのである。

THE JAPANESE PEOPLE
AND
“INDIGENOUS CHRISTIANITY”
BY RINZO SHIINA

(Translated by Sakae Kobayashi)

The Preaching Thief

In spite of the fact that I am a Japanese writer who was baptized only seven years ago, the Japanese churches have asked me to do a number of things for them. The reason seems to me that there has been almost no example in Japan of a novelist who was a daily worker and even a communist before becoming a follower of Christ. I have been asked to speak, write and even broadcast about my religious experiences. Every time I do this, I have felt I am like a thief who has been caught by the police. When I was still young, there was a thief nicknamed “Sekkyo Goto” or the preaching thief. After he was released, he travelled around Japan giving speeches on his experiences of burglary. He sometimes wrote about his experiences in newspaper and magazines. I can never forget my strange feeling when I saw a poster which advertized his coming to our town to give a speech.

Has Christianity No Root in Japanese Society ?

Then, why is it of so much value to the Japanese churches that a man like me, a former communist writer, should take up the problems of the Japanese masses and deal with them? Those who do not know of the situation in Japan may feel it quite strange. However, it is not so surprising after all. Japanese Christianity has had no language by which it could speak directly to the Japanese laborers and masses. In other words, Christianity in Japan has been the property of a few intelligent people. It may not be a mistake to say that Japanese Christianity has been unwilling to get

rid of such a *stigma*. Moreover, since the end of World War II communism has succeeded in winning the hearts of university students and of the intelligentsia, and so the only ground for Japanese Christianity has partly been destroyed. It may be said that Christianity floats unattached on the surface of present day Japanese society. The fact that quite a number of Newly Arisen Sects (or *Shinkō Shūkyō*) are getting into the hearts of the masses may be ironical for Japanese Christianity which deplores the decrease in the number of believers.

The Urge to Confess My Christian Faith

Unfortunately, this serious problem in which the Japanese churches are deeply involved is my very own problem, also. The reason is that the readers of my books are Japanese, and about 99.9 percent of the readers are those who have not had contact with the message of Christianity, or who have been unwilling to contact it. Therefore, I assumed that so far as Christianity was concerned, communication between the Japanese readers and me would be totally impossible. However, I have tried to bring about this communication through various methods. The Gospel of Christ was decisive for me, and so my own works could not be separated from my own faith in Christ. I have tried to find the best ways of expression in order that my confession of faith could have any appeal to the Japanese people.

Why is Christianity Unsuccessful in Japan?

Needless to say, quite a number of western and Japanese scholars have investigated various reasons why Christianity in Japan is still unsuccessful. What I had felt about Christianity until I was baptized was that Christianity had always been on the side of authority and would never suffer with the masses. The Japanese churches would not suffer by dealing with the serious

problems in which both workers and capitalists were deeply involved. I don't know of the situation in foreign countries. But, in Japan the people are either capitalists or workers, and no other class of people exists. Therefore, Christianity in Japan may aptly be expressed as something which is floating in the air, something neither on earth nor in heaven.

The Foreign-ness of Christianity

Another strange feeling which is quite common among Japanese is that Jesus of Nazareth might shed his blood for mankind, but not for the Japanese people themselves. This is the heterogenous characteristic of Christianity to the Japanese. In other words, it is like comparing foreign languages to the Japanese language. Foreign languages are understood by only a few Japanese. And these few Japanese usually belong to the privileged classes of Japanese society. The Japanese masses have an idea that foreign languages, foreigners and the privileged classes in Japan are simply different names for the same thing. The fact that Japanese show unusual respect for foreigners may be due to the above mentioned feeling they have. However, the occupation by foreign armies led them to realize the fact that foreigners were, after all, not different from the Japanese, and that there were quite a number of bad and stupid people among foreigners too.

Unique and Indigenous Christianity

My opinion, however, is that we Japanese Christians can not and should not eliminate the unique characteristics of Christianity. When the Gospel is brought to us, the Japanese laborers, it may contradict us. Although this contradiction may be a sad one, on the other hand it is also a joyful one. I am convinced that the really living words and actions come from this contradicting characteristic of the Gospel. This very unique characteristic is the

way by which we can live Christ himself is a unique existence for us as human beings. I have no hesitation in saying that if Christianity were to lose its own unique characteristics, it would cease to be genuine Christianity. I don't mean, however, that visible exotic and strange features should be maintained in the Japanese churches. The uniqueness of the Gospel must be understood in connection with the fundamentally unique characteristics of Christ as a human being. I doubt not that every word and action that springs out of this uniqueness of the Gospel can surely become Japanese in such a way as to give real power and significance to the Japanese people.

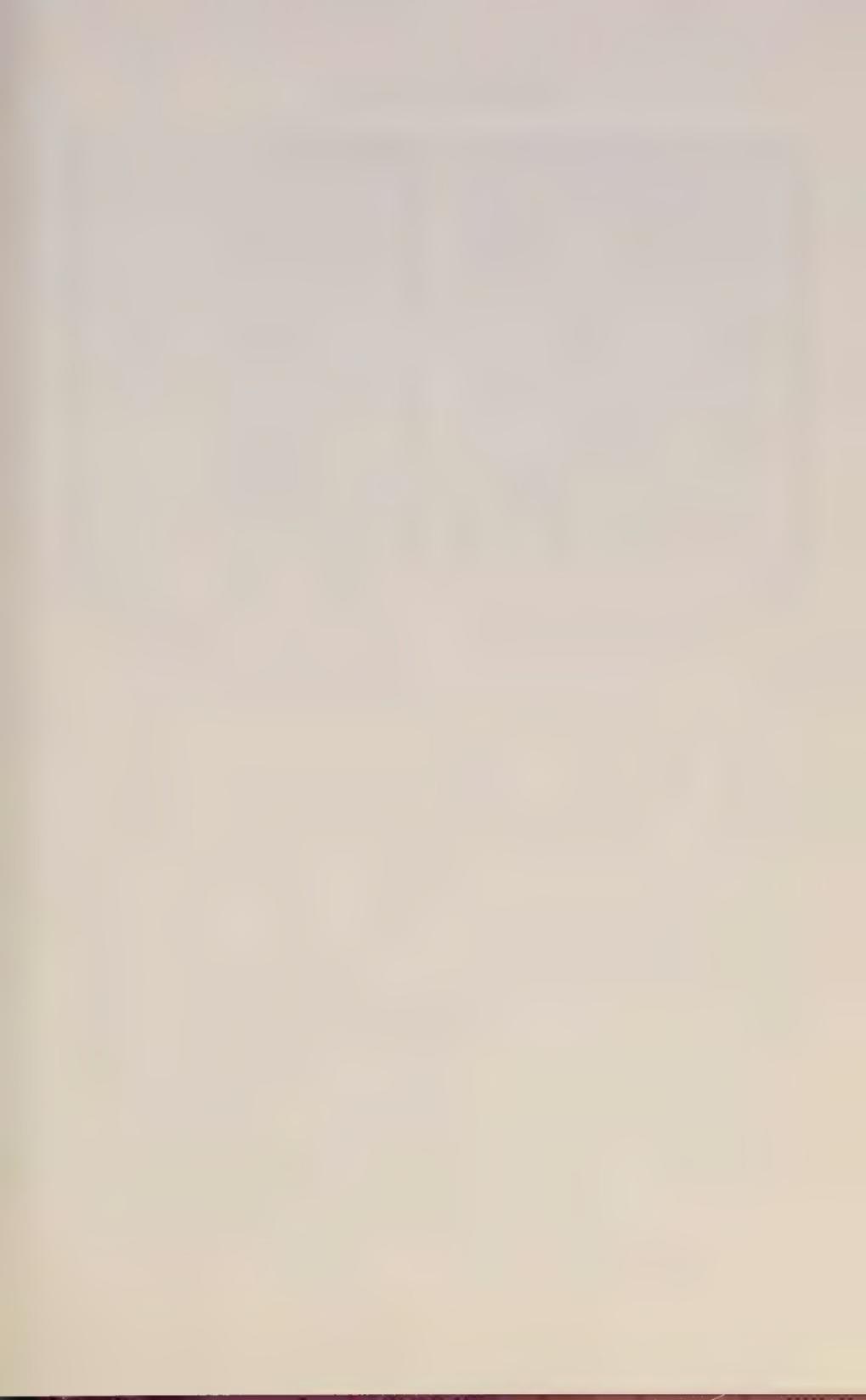
ISE OR DAISEKIZI ? SOKA GAKKAI.

By HARRY THOMSEN

Although Shintoism lost its 'face' during the war the ghost ultra-nationalism has reared its head again, and many are troubled eyes and uneasy thoughts that have been turned toward the *Shinto* shrine of *Ise*. Every report that the Liberal Democratic party was thinking of giving a special status to the Grand Shrine at *Ise* has been accompanied by immediate outcries in the press. It does not seem to have occurred to very many people that ultra-nationalism might return in a religious garment different from that of *Shinto*. Still it is the opinion of the writer that some of the troubled eyes and uneasy thoughts, before it is too late, had better be turned towards *Daisekiji*, the center of the powerful *Soka Gakkai*.

Statistics

The *Soka Gakkai* has had a phenomenal growth. Founded by *Tsunesaburo Makiguchi* in 1930 it made a slow start and was suppressed by the police in 1943, *Makiguchi* being thrown in prison where he died. But one of *Makiguchi*'s disciples, *Josei Toda*, started anew in 1946 and turned out to be a formidable organizer who made *Soka Gakkai* what it is today. Under his able leadership the *S. G.* has grown from 35,000 households in 1953 to more than one million households at the beginning of 1959. During one year, 1958, the number of new believers outnumbered the total number of Christians in Japan. The present strength is about 4,200,000 believers or, through a brief existence of 13 years, seven times more than the number of Japanese Christians. The present rate of growth is close to 100,000 persons every month.





Makiguchi Tsunesaburo founded
S. G. in 1930, died in prison 1944.



Toda Josei, powerful leader and
real organizer of *Soka Gakkai*
from 1946, died April 1958.

New Religion or Buddhist Sect?

Soka Gakkai is a lay movement or organization of the Buddhist *Nichiren Shōshū* Sect (日蓮正宗) and must technically speaking be classified under Buddhism, but it has many of the attributes and characteristics of the New Religions. Incidentally the large majority of the so-called New Religions are not new at all, but are based on old Buddhist or *Shinto* teachings under a modern facade.

The *Nichiren Shōshū*, meaning the 'orthodox' or 'true' sect of *Nichiren*, has 707 years of history behind it and led a relatively unimportant existence until its 'child', *Soka Gakkai*, grew into a giant that brought its 'spiritual father' into the limelight of the Japanese religious scene at the same time as it completely overshadowed him.

Daisekiji

The center of *Nichiren Shōshū* has since the beginning of the



The center of *Soka Gakkai* at *Daisekiji* with *Fuji-san* in the background.

history of the sect been at *Daisekiji*, close to *Fuji-san*. Last year a 400 mill. yen, 6-story ferro-concrete building, the Grand *Kodo*, was erected with a total floor space of 2,476 *tsubo* (about 9,904 sq. yards) and a main hall accommodating 6,000 people. *Daisekiji* is always full of *Soka Gakkai* believers from all over the country—March 1~31 1958, the inauguration month, more than 200,000 gathered, a large proportion of them young people. Although they cannot in any way be regarded as 'pilgrims' in the strict sense of the word—'Wanderlust', joy of nature and adventure, as well as curiosity being some of the motives behind their coming—there is

no mistaking their inflammatory fanaticism and deep conviction; this is maybe best of all seen in the '*Ushitora*' service, the service from 1~2 o'clock every night which has been carried out without exception every night for the last 670 years. The writer has had the experience of attending



The *a la Picasso* garden on the top of the *Kōdō*.

this service, sitting among 3000 worshippers whose fanatical '*Namu Myoho Renge Kyo*' ('Adoration be to the Scripture of the Lotus of the Perfect Truth'), mixed with the dry sound of the rosaries and the earsplitting boom of the drums, sounded like the waves of the ocean.

The main objects of worship at *Daisekiji* are the 'gohonzon' (御本尊) and the 'onikuge'. The *gohonzon* is a wooden *Mandala* which is said to have been made by *Nichiren* himself. The *onikuge* is a tooth said to be the tooth of *Nichiren* that he pulled out and gave to his disciple. When he pulled it out, they say, a little piece of flesh was attached, and this flesh is said to have grown and grown through the centuries so that today it covers almost the whole tooth. When the tooth is completely covered by the flesh *Nichiren Shōshū* is supposed to have reached its zenith.

Teaching

The teaching of *Nichiren Shōshū* is practically the same as that of most of the other 31 *Nichiren* Buddhist sects in Japan, with which N. S. is on the bitterest of terms—the fanatical intolerance and virulent attacks of N. S. and S. G. being esp. directed against the main branch of *Nichiren*, which has its headquarter at *Minobu-san* just on the other side the river from *Daisekiji*. The main bone of contention is the question whether the above-mentioned *Mandala* was originally written by *Nichiren* himself or not.

The teaching of the *Nichiren Shōshū*, and *Soka Gakkai*, is based on the **Saddharma Pundarika** ('the Scripture of the Lotus of the Perfect Truth'), in Japanese *Hokkekyo* (法華經). *Jogyo Bodhisattva*, referred to in this *sutra*, is believed to be a reincarnation of the Eternal Buddha, who again is said to be reincarnated in *Nichiren*. The N. S. claim that their present Chief Abbot, *Nichijun Horigome*, the 65th chief abbot of N. S., can trace his tradition and authority

back directly to *Nichiren* and they maintain staunchly that all the other 31 *Nichiren* sects are based on false traditions. "Only by chanting the '*Namu Myoho Renge Kyo*' before the *Mandala* will man be able to attain enlightenment, get rid of delusion, and contribute toward the establishment of lasting world peace",—are words constantly heard from *Soka Gakkai* people.

Although *Nichiren Shoshū* takes care of the liturgy, and doctrinal background of *Soka Gakkai*, still there are certain specific S. G. teachings. Acc. to *Shakubuku Kyoten* (折伏教典), 'the Book of Purgation', the teaching of *Soka Gakkai* centers on **the three values** of beauty, benefit and good as against the three 'anti-values' of ugliness, harm and evil. Significantly 'truth' is not mentioned, and the 'Book of Purgation' says: "what is truthful does not necessarily bring you happiness". The intention is evidently to find a new way of religious evaluation that is not built on abstract thoughts about 'truth', but is built on self-assertion and popular appeal.

The 'Book of Purgation' contains besides a mixture of old Buddhist doctrines and fragments of scientific theories and facts an interesting chapter, (VI), that by pseudo-scientific remarks and venomous attacks tries to prove the complete falsehood of other religions. In turn Christianity, *PL Kyodan*, *Shinto*, *Rissho Kosei Kai*, *Rei Yu Kai* and others are 'taken care of' and scourged. A couple of citations may interest the reader: "Since Christ had a body, he ought to be obviously heavier than air by the law of gravity—if a heavy body had arisen into light air it would be contrary to Archimedes' principles. Therefore if you believe this for a fact, you will have to deny all rules and laws."

"The very Christians who insist that Jesus was crucified for them for the sake of redemption, always commit sin, and confess, and commit again. Sin does not at all diminish but increases all over the world."

"God is not the Creator. Living things as well as non-living

things of the universe are not given birth by other things but by themselves. Our life is not given by our parents, and is not either given by God or by Buddha." "Christianity overestimates sin. They talk about original sin, a sin that nobody can escape—hence they regard all human beings as criminals." (it may interest the reader to know that 'sin' by S. G. is defined as: "ignorance of the true teaching of *Soka Gakkai*").—————

These few quotes will suffice to give an impression of the subtle logic, the evident popular appeal, the emphasis on the strength of man and the complete rejection of other religions…… all earmarks of the *Soka Gakkai* propaganda. It must also be added that the 'Book of Purgation' is diligently studied by all *Soka Gakkai* believers……at home, at informal gatherings ('zadankai') or in regular courses. It is correct to say that the *Soka Gakkai* believers are the people in Japan who have the best superficial knowledge of the various Japanese religions.

Faith Healing

Everybody entering *Soka Gakkai* is promised cure of any disease—as well as automatic ability to make more money. The S. G. weekly newspaper, the *Seikyo Shimbun* (聖教新聞), is full of stories of miraculous cures of cancer, infantile paralysis, etc.…… There is no doubt that this is one of the factors making S. G. achieve its tremendous growth and at the same time there can be little doubt that this may be one of the very factors to cause the future decline of *Soka Gakkai*.…… The preliminary advantage and the inherent danger of bountiful promises was demonstrated in *Hokkaido* where *Soka Gakkai* won strong support among the coal miners, and a couple of years ago controlled 75% of the miners in the big *Yubari* mine, promising them automatical rise of wages without strikes and immunity to mine accidents……winning out in the first fight with the trade unions, but finally losing their

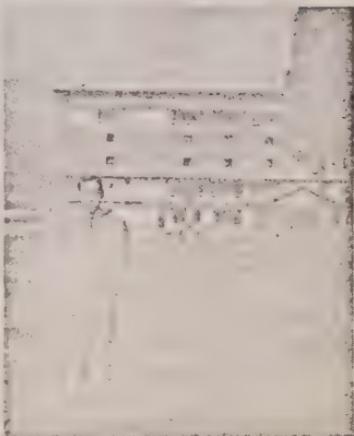
majority, partly because of the unions' information campaign against *Soka Gakkai*, partly because of a mine accident.

Political Impact

In no other field is *Soka Gakkai* demonstrating its strength and potential danger as clearly as in politics. It is the avowed intention of S. G. to win the majority of the seats in both houses of Parliament within two decades—a thought that loses much of its apparent bombastics if we look at the recent election results.

In the April 30 local elections all 76 of the candidates S. G. put up in the *Tokyo* area were elected to the 23 town assemblies of *Tokyo*—and of the 287 candidates put up by S. G. for local assemblies throughout the country only 26 failed.……At the elections for the House of Councillors this week, June 2, the whole country was surprised to hear that all 6 S. G. candidates were elected, giving it 9 seats (with the three before) in the 250 seat House. The total poll for the S. G. candidates was more than 2,230,800 throughout the country, and the S. G. candidate in *Tokyo*, *Yasu Kashiwabara*, polled the largest amount of any candidate in *Tokyo* with over 470,000 votes.

That many of these votes were won with inflammatory fanaticism, intimidation and even threats and bribery is common knowledge—several S. G. people were sent to prison for breaking the elections laws—but it must also be acknowledged that most of the votes were due to the surprisingly efficient propaganda machine of S. G. and to the fact that there are a large number of strong personalities in *Soka Gakkai*. Whether the large number of strong



The present leader of S. G., Koizumi-san, in front of the 6-story ferro-concrete Kōdō

personalities are going to strengthen the religion indefinitely, or whether it is going to cause one or many future splits in *Soka Gakkai*, is a question that only the future can answer—and on that question depends perhaps the future of more than the *Soka Gakkai*. Acc. to the writer's opinion the danger of ultra-nationalism is apt to come from *Daisekiji* rather than from Ise. It may not be an accident that *Soka Gakkai*'s Grand *Kōdo* was built so close to *Fuji-san*, the national symbol of Japan—and it may be worthwhile to remember that when *Toda*, the leader of S. G. died April 20, 1958 Prime Minister *Kishi* and the Education Minister *Matsunaga* came in person and paid tribute at *Toda*'s funeral.

It is the present writer's firm opinion that *Soka Gakkai* with its tremendous growth, its hold on young people, its strong support by the workers and farmers, and its surprising political impact will become the strongest religious force in Japan in less than five years.



One of *Soka Gakkai*'s gigantic meetings, with an attendance of well over 100,000

Here Christianity may meet its strongest challenge in this country, and maybe the most serious one we have ever faced.

The virtual standstill of Christian mission in Japan during the last ten years has been explained in many ways. One pet theory has been that Christianity can never win over the Japanese as long as it is intolerant and exclusive. But is that the only explanation? It is quite interesting to note that the most successful religious movement in post-war Japan, *Soka Gakkai*, at the same time is the most intolerant and exclusive religion Japan has ever seen.

BOOK REVIEW

Yamaguchi Susumu: **Dynamic Buddha and Static Buddha**

(Risōsha, Tōkyō, 1958. 93pp. 330 yen.)

Reviewed by Alfred Bloom

This volume by the president of Otani University is significant as an attempt to present to the Western world a positive interpretation of the very difficult doctrine of non-duality, emptiness or interdependent origination. He attempts this from both the philosophical and religious aspects.

Among the various purposes of the volume, Dr. Yamaguchi wishes to show that St. *Shinran*'s teaching, as represented by the *Jōdo Shinshū* sect of Japanese Buddhism, is truly *Shin-true-Buddhism*. He states "Here I tried to show how *Shinran*'s *Shin* sect, as a practical system of the Humanism (pp. 92-93), and, on the basis of the classic texts of the Bodhicaryavatara of *Shantideva*, to indicate the practical philosophy in the terms Dynamic and Static Buddha" (p. 15). He also takes up the philosophy of *Nagarjuna* in the *Vigrahavyavartani* treatise where the relation of Knower and Known is criticized (pp. 25-27).

Among the many points in this book we can note the stress on the basic philosophy of Mahayana Buddhism. Yamaguchi points to "interdependent origination" as the key to understanding Buddhism. Without this thought there is no Buddhism. Together with this stress is the complementary emphasis on *Shunya*-Emptiness which is the experience of salvation in Buddhism. By experiencing interdependent origination, not as an abstract doctrine, but interiorly, we are led to the realization of Emptiness. This is the Supreme wisdom of non-duality and nondiscrimination.

The experience of Wisdom, however, is not for one's self alone, but it is to have practical significance manifested through Compassion. Wisdom is in order to compassion, but must be fulfilled in Compassion. Compassion arises out of the experience of interdependent origination.

This is illustrated in the standard Buddhist parable of the 3 term relation of given, gift and receiver. None exists without the other. The result of this perception if selflessness, **muga**. The Buddhist acts, but must deny the act and actor. This is the foundation of Compassion and the way the meditative Buddha becomes the Active Buddha.

Interesting is the problem of tenacity for Emptiness. This criticism is aimed at reaching the deepest Emptiness by never letting it become abstract.

All this philosophy issues in paradoxical expressions concerning the Buddha who preaches but has never said a word. This makes Buddhism considerably difficult for a Westerner to grasp, but when the religious aim is taken in, it becomes more reasonable.

The concept of "nominal formation" as the nature of this world, treads the fine line of accrediting the world with real existence as nominal formation, but denying it absolute ontological validity. More study of Buddhist ontological concepts in relation to their religious import is actually needed.

Finally the author attempts to unite *Nagarjuna*'s views and criticism of existence to the religious structure of *Jōdo Shinshū* Buddhism. It must be said that this is the hardest to follow. Generally, it seems as though *Amida* and the Pure Land are identified with the highest Emptiness and that somehow this emptiness moves out as great compassion manifested in the Original vows of *Amida*. It becomes expressed in *Shakamuni*'s preaching. Ordinary men, following their pursuits, hear the preaching of the Buddha, and are led to the experience of Emptiness in their ordinary lives.

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